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OCI No. 1312/74
10 April 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Detente: The View From the Kremlin

It is no more than analytical prudence to assume that the policy of detente, its wholistic configuration as well as its constituent parts, is under continuing review by the leaders in the Kremlin. However, the circumstantial evidence also suggests that Brezhnev and his cohorts, both his supporters and his detractors, are now giving fresh attention to the status of detente, and its viability as a strategy for achieving the purposes of the Soviet state and people in the world and at home.

Secretary Kissinger in Moscow made the undoubtedly pertinent point that Brezhnev has a historical stake in detente, but the Soviet leader must be equally impressed with detente's present and future claim on his political fortune. Insofar as detente is thought to be in trouble, then Brezhnev himself is under some pressure to demonstrate either that it is not so, or that he is moving with alacrity to make those policy adjustments that are necessary to protect Soviet interests under changing circumstances. In his Alma Alta speech in mid-March, Brezhnev again sought to disarm the naysayers by arguing that the present difficulties had been foreseen by himself and the other supporters of the present policy. As has been the case at previous uncertain junctures, there was a defensive quality to his remarks on detente, perhaps giving evidence that he is under some pressure from his would-be successors, perhaps signaling that he himself is having second thoughts.

When deputy economic minister Kuz'min almost plaintively told a US diplomat during Kissinger's visit that the Soviet Union needed an economic agreement--any agreement--in order

to counter the arguments of unnamed opportunists, he may well have been doing more than playing negotiating games. Indeed, Kuz'min may have been speaking to an important aspect of detente that is as frustrating as it is ephemeral. Detente is a concept that is, at its heart, subjective.

There is no coherent way of taking its temperature, of determining its health by objective criteria. Detente is in trouble when it is thought to be in trouble. Indeed, detente is as subject to a downward spiral of self-feeding disappointments as to an updraft of unrealistic expectations. Progress can be made on a panoply of issues, but one highly visible setback, even if greatly exaggerated, can create doubts that are not commensurate with any objective criteria. At this relatively early stage of its development, detente is a hostage to the vagaries of domestic politics, the mercurial nature of public relations, the prejudices, the fears as well as the justifiable concerns of honest men.

For Brezhnev, the emergence of the negative force of all these factors has been somewhat unsettling. His recent ascerbic references to the Western press are evidence of frustration that the Soviet Union is being unfairly saddled with the responsibility for what seems to be going wrong with detente. It is one thing to reap opprobrium for conscious policies, quite another to be irrationally blamed for circumstances that are not of one's own doing.

For the Soviets, detente means more than reducing tensions and building shared interests with the US; it also refers to West Europe and the rest of the non-Communist world. Nonetheless, relations with the US are the lynchpin. If the administration in Washington--any administration--is in political difficulty, then the Soviets have reason to be concerned. In the present circumstances, such concerns have the additional dimension that President Nixon has, in some respects, become identified with the policy of detente. If the President is in political trouble then so is detente. Moreover, insofar as the President is politically weakened, he is less able to deliver on issues that are of immediate concern to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, and Brezhnev in particular, has a strong political stake in the welfare of President Nixon. They will do what they can to make the President's road easier--within limits. Where those

limits lay is an ongoing analytical problem. Suffice it to say that because of his own internal requirements, Brezhnev will find it tougher and tougher to be helpful as the detente atmosphere sours, and if it appears that Moscow is not getting what it wants out of detente.

The following sections present an abbreviated and overly rationalized run-down on the major issues affecting detente as they might be seen by detente proponents and opponents in the Soviet leadership. Not surprisingly, it presents a mixed picture, and it may convey some sense of how complex and inter-related the factors are in the "real world."

Detente is bound to have a significant impact on high politics in the Kremlin. Not only is it a conceptual framework for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy but it is fraught with ideological and concrete implications for the nature of the Soviet polity. It is highly unlikely, however, that a manichean interpretation of detente's impact on Kremlin politics--i.e., the "liberal" pro-detente forces vs. the "orthodox" hard-line opponents--accurately depicts the conflicting opinions and motivations of the contenders for power. The ideal types almost certainly do not fit existing persons; it seems more likely that each individual, whatever his own biases, finds himself sometimes perched right in the middle. Moreover, politics and personal political gains may take precedence over the "rights" and "wrongs" of a particular issue. Opportunism, and the need or desire to be on the winning side may cause "hardliners" to back pro-detente policies, or vice versa.

There does not seem to be any overriding substantive imperative, unless one is prepared to argue that the Soviet Union's need to modernize makes some form of detente historically inevitable. It may be prudent to estimate that there is a systemic bias in favor of detente that is significantly reinforced by Brezhnev's personal need that detente not end in ignominious failure. Beyond those biases, however, there is some latitude for a tougher overall approach and a harder line in specific substantive areas that are particularly sensitive for the Soviets, or where they think that detente is not fully serving their needs.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ARGUMENTS

The policy of detente means different things to different Soviet leaders. Some will argue that moves toward accommodation with the West can be pursued with little adjustment of Soviet foreign political objectives or domestic policies. They will contend that a relaxation of international tensions will provide Moscow with a breathing spell during which greater attention can be paid to strengthening the Soviet economic and military base. These leaders will argue that Moscow's detente tactics have already produced major benefits, including US acknowledgement of the USSR's right to strategic equality, recognition of Moscow's special role in the settlement of virtually all international problems, acceptance of Soviet post-war claims in Europe, and isolation of China. This faction will also maintain that persistent pursuit of detente will eventually result in Soviet emergence as the number one power in the world.

Other pro-detente leaders will argue that detente should be used to modernize the USSR's economic and political system and to redirect scarce resources from defense to more productive economic endeavors. They will contend that increments to Soviet strategic power are unlikely to produce greater security for the USSR, and that economic priorities must be changed to the benefit of the civilian sectors of the economy. In their view, the survival of the Soviet political system depends more on the modernization of Moscow's political and economic institutions than on the continued build-up of the military establishment, and that if major remedial action is not taken soon, Moscow cannot expect to play a major role in world affairs despite its military power. The USSR must negotiate earnestly with the West and not try to seek marginal advantages that can only cast doubt on Soviet intentions and deny Moscow access to vital Western technology and capital.

On the other side of the fence are those in the Soviet leadership who will contend that detente either as a tactic or a strategy will only encourage the West to undertake new assaults against Communism. They will point to Allende's overthrow in Chile and to unilateral US actions in the Middle East as proof that Moscow's hands are tied because of detente. They will point to CSCE controversies and the trade-emigration tangle with the US as evidence that the West is, in fact, already seeking to undermine Soviet society. All these events show the real nature of US imperialism which is only waiting for the propitious moment to pounce on the USSR.

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They will argue that a war economy and extreme vigilance are required to protect the Soviet Union from its external enemies and from the subversion of internal dissidents.

Moreover, Moscow is duty bound to support Communist and revolutionary movements worldwide. Collapse of the capitalist system and political structure, they will avow, can provide the only conditions under which the Soviet state can flourish. Thus, any deals with the West will only strengthen Moscow's adversaries.

SALT

The strategic arms limitations talks that began in November 1969 have become the centerpiece of the process of accommodation in US-Soviet relations. Because these talks involve the vital security interests of both sides, their relative success or failure will have considerable impact on the whose policy of detente and perhaps even on the political fortunes of those Soviet leaders who support this policy. "Success" at the talks would mean that deeply rooted mutual suspicions about each other's intentions could be set aside in the interest of achieving a greater degree of strategic stability in the relationship. This in turn would likely produce greater efforts toward conciliation in other areas touching on the vital interests of the two sides. "Failure" at the talks would not only jeopardize the continued viability of the arms agreements already achieved, but would lead to an intensification of the arms race, a sharpening of the adversary relationship across-the-board, and increasing official and public questioning on both sides of the advantages of detente in general.

Pro

The arguments for continued Soviet interest in negotiated arms restraint are much the same as they were when SALT began. The Soviets want US recognition of Moscow's right to strategic equality and a role in world affairs commensurate with this capability. The Soviet proponents of detente would argue that the ABM Treaty and the Interim Agreement on offensive weapons were good deals from Moscow's

standpoint, insofar as they checked the further deployment of antimissile weapons--an area in which the US had a commanding technological edge at the time of agreement--and allowed a Soviet advantage, both in numbers and throw-weight, in the systems limited by the offensive agreement.

These Soviet leaders would argue in behalf of future arms agreements on both military and economic grounds. In their view new SALT accords would have the effect of restraining US technological developments in the strategic area, allowing Moscow to catch up, and perhaps even to gain some slight margin of advantage in certain strategic capabilities. A new agreement might also permit some economies in the strategic weapons area, allowing greater expenditures on conventional forces and arms and providing more resources for non-military sectors of the economy as well.

Con

The political forces arrayed against detente would argue that the US cannot be trusted--as evidenced by Secretary Schlesinger's recent pronouncements--and that US programmed and planned strategic forces show that Washington would like to achieve strategic superiority. They would contend that the USSR will be able to catch up with the US in strategic weaponry during the period of the Interim Agreement, and possibly achieve a significant strategic advantage if the arms talks and the detente policy are properly manipulated. The present mood of the US Congress and the Nixon Administration's political difficulties can be exploited to Moscow's benefit. In addition, the USSR can use its emerging strategic prowess to impose Soviet diktat on the solution of world problems. In effect, the detractors of detente would argue that history shows that the US only appreciates armed strength, and that the Soviet leaders are duty bound to acquire whatever it takes to assure that the USSR is the number one power in the world.

THE TECHNOLOGY FACTOR

Although there is a real question in the minds of Western analysts about the extent to which the Soviet economy can effectively absorb advanced foreign technology and managerial methods, Soviet efforts to gain both have been an important part of Moscow's move toward detente.

The proponents of detente likely argue that without access to Western goods and markets, the USSR will have little hope of catching up with the industrialized countries of the West, and, in fact, may have difficulty in maintaining Moscow's present position. They will tend to rationalize the setback for most-favored-nation treatment, saying that the Nixon Administration is fully committed to improving trade and extending credits to Moscow. The Administration and US businessmen will find ways of circumventing US Congressional opposition and efforts to link the trade issue with Soviet emigration policies.

These detente advocates contend that autarky has failed and that the USSR must have access to Western technology and capital investments if the Soviet economy is to be modernized. The proponents will argue further that greater economic interdependence with the West will likely produce a more stable and advantageous international order, insofar as Moscow's adversaries have as much to gain from increased economic ties as the USSR, and will therefore be reluctant to move against clearly perceived Soviet interests.

Mindful of traditional Soviet sensitivity to Western ideas and influences, the detente faction will say that greater access to Western economies need not require a loosening up of internal discipline, and certainly will not require fundamental changes in the economic or political system. A greater influx of Westerners in the USSR will naturally require vigilance on the part of Soviet authorities, but if the Communist state has any vitality at all, the populace can be made resistant to bourgeois overtures.

The opponents of detente will argue against the foregoing considerations on political and economic grounds. They will say that the West is bent on subverting Soviet society and that economic bridgebuilding will be the instrument of these efforts. They will argue that the greater presence of Westerners in the USSR, whether businessmen or tourists, will inevitably result in a resurgence of bourgeois morals and political dissidence in Soviet society.

The detractors of detente will also contend that greater economic ties with the West will entail forms of dependence that will inhibit Moscow from pursuing traditional political

objectives, will encourage Soviet allies and clients to follow Moscow's example, and will constitute a "sell-out" of other progressive political forces in the world. They will point to US Congressional efforts to link trade issues with Soviet domestic policies as proof of Washington's perfidy, alleging that the Nixon Administration is not genuinely committed to non-discriminatory treatment of the USSR, but wants only to extract advantages from Moscow.

On economic grounds, the anti-detente forces will argue that the West is only interested in gaining access to vital Soviet natural resources. To allow such access would strengthen economies of Moscow's adversaries at the expense of future Soviet economic growth and would deplete resources that the USSR will itself eventually need. This opposition will also maintain that increased economic ties with the West are likely to produce over time changes in the Soviet economic system, since Moscow's planned economy and economic structure is ill-suited to adapt to Western business methods and managerial techniques.

INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Ideology is in fundamental competition with detente: the concept of a revolutionary international Communist movement, with the Soviet Union as its leader and chief benefactor, must somehow be squared with the Soviet Union as partner in peaceful co-existence.

Pro

Detente does not preclude strenuous ideological competition with the West; pro-detente forces not only subscribe to, but emphasize, the proposition. The Soviet Union has the best social system and it should become clear in the industrial West as well as the Third World that socialism, not capitalism, will meet the needs of the people. Socialism need not fear that increased contacts with the West necessarily mean a loss of ideological fervor. On the contrary, it may turn out that the greater familiarity with the West will be a tonic for the socialist peoples. Brezhnev's concept of "victory through contacts" means victory over the backsliders and the reactionary elements in the socialist systems as well as over the ideas and the gimmickery of the capitalist nations.

The pro-detente people would not deny that increased contacts with the West will place an additional burden on ideological discipline within the socialist community. But socialism is equal to the challenge, and heightened awareness of what it means to be a communist, they might well argue, will not only immunize our people against the siren song of the capitalists, but will have the positive effect of reinvigorating and rededicating the socialist parties. At home, it will be necessary to tighten-down on those who oppose the socialist system and those who are irretrievably lost to anti-Sovietism. The disposition of the Solzhenitsyn case demonstrates that detente has not reduced our capacity to purge our society of heretics.

Lenin teaches that socialism must constantly adapt to changing conditions, and detente is appropriate to the present historical period. Under the shadow of nuclear war, the old tactics and strategy run an inordinate risk of destroying the Soviet state and people. Moreover, the energy, resource and inflation crisis that grips the capitalist West is evidence that detente does not stand in the way of the inevitable decline and fall of capitalism.

Taking the tactical line, the pro-detente forces would also argue that detente helps promote the idea of "united front;" it makes Communist movements and parties respectable in parts of the world where they are thought to be sinister creatures of the Soviet Union, or it makes them viable candidates for power in countries of Western Europe where they have been effectively shut-out.

Con

The naysayers would emphasize that detente, even as it seems to be working--reducing tensions with the West and establishing increasing contacts and inter-dependence--will inevitably cause a lessening of socialist discipline, no matter what lip service is paid to greater vigilance. The USSR will be inclined to adopt quasi-capitalist methods and thinking in order, for example, to make more effective use of the Western technology and know-how that is to be introduced.

In Eastern Europe, pro-capitalist elements will be encouraged to pressure their governments for increased liberalization in the economic sphere, in the pattern of

everyday life, and in the expression of diverse (and noxious) ideas. This will make it more difficult for the Soviet Union to keep Eastern Europe from going the route of Romania, Yugoslavia, or Czechoslovakia during the 1968 "Prague Spring."

It may be true that the so-called detente atmosphere will make it easier to organize a new world Communist meeting, but at the same time it makes it less likely that such a conference will take a firm stand against the Chinese or will otherwise rally around the Soviet Union as the head of a disciplined, cohesive and aggressively competitive world communist movement. Detente with the US makes it easier for Peking to charge that it is the Soviet Union that is revisionist. Moreover, it makes a tough line with China more difficult to sell psychologically within the Communist world. After all, if the Soviet Union can find a way of composing its differences with the capitalists why not with the apostate Communists?

The current crisis of capitalism, far from demonstrating the efficiency of detente, is a good reason to question detente's utility to the Soviet Union. As the "crisis" grows worse the capitalists will become more desperate, adventuresome, and dangerous. The Soviet Union will need greater vigilance not less. Moreover, the problems of the capitalists offer opportunities to the Soviet Union which ought not to be foregone in the interests of anything as ephemeral as detente.

CHINA AND EAST ASIA

Pro

The proponents of detente would argue with some force that better relations with the West and the US helps isolate Communist China. They would argue that China represents a real and growing threat to the Soviet Union. Peking not only has a growing military capability that makes any Soviet preemptive attack less and less attractive, but the whole raison d'etre of Peking's foreign policy is to frustrate the Soviet Union, to counter and arrest Soviet influence in the non-Communist world and to challenge its hegemony among the Communist parties and nations. The threat from Peking has grown as China has ended its self-imposed

isolation of the Cultural Revolution, and seeks to promote its place in the world as the first among equals of the "third world"--the one nation that is big and strong enough to challenge the great powers, but whose economic and technological development enables it to identify its interests with the other developing countries.

The Soviet Union must, the proponents would argue, place itself in a position vis a vis the Chinese where the onus falls on Peking for the tension that arises from the rivalry of the two nations. Detente with the US and the West serves as a model for how nations with different social systems can compose their differences. The Soviet Union is willing to reach an accommodation with the renegade Chinese, but it is Peking's obduracy that stands in the way. A tougher Soviet attitude on the prospects for peace with the US and the non-Communist world serves Peking's purposes by enabling the Chinese to argue that the Soviets are the new imperialists on the international scene.

The proponents would also see the continuation of a viable detente policy as forestalling closer relations between Washington and Peking. The US, they might say, would naturally turn to Peking if it believed that the prospects had declined for better relations with the Soviet Union. It would do so to apply psychological and diplomatic pressure on Moscow, and perhaps even in order to create a security threat for the Soviet Union in the East as a means of diverting Soviet attention from Europe and the Middle East. For their part, the Chinese would seize the opportunity afforded by a breakdown in the detente atmosphere to improve its relations with the US to gain some leverage with the Soviet Union. Peking might calculate that a souring of US-Soviet relations would inevitably have the effect of increasing suspicions in Western Europe of Soviet intentions and would, therefore, breathe fresh life into the nascent European movement toward defense cooperation. This in turn might have the effect, in Chinese eyes, of making it harder for the Soviet Union to hang tough in the East. As a consequence, the proponents of detente might argue, the Chinese would be even less inclined to reach an acceptable accommodation with the Soviet Union.

The proponents might also make the case that maintaining the detente atmosphere with the US would make a post-Mao leadership more amenable to improving relations with the

Soviet Union. As long as the Chinese feel themselves to be on the short-end of the triangular relationship, they will have some constraints on their international adventurism and some incentive to compromise their differences with Moscow. If US-Soviet relations are relatively cool and, concomitantly, if Sino-US relations are relatively warm, the new leaders will believe themselves to be in the advantageous position and they have little reason to adopt restraint or a conciliatory line with the Soviet Union.

A significant weakening of the detente atmosphere would also complicate the Soviet Union's relations with Japan. Although Tokyo has strong economic interests in Siberian development, it might be more inclined to drive a tougher bargain if it felt that the Soviets had adopted a tougher stance toward the non-Communist world. Domestic and US pressures might force the Japanese to make a closer linkage between economic cooperation and political issues such as the northern territories and a peace treaty. Peking would also seek to take advantage of Japanese apprehensions by pressing for closer economic and political ties with Tokyo.

The Soviet Union would face similar problems elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia. Moscow's influence in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore would be arrested and its efforts to curtail Chinese influence would be undermined if there were a growing impression the region that the Soviets were launched on a new and tougher foreign policy. In addition, the US might be more forceful than in recent years to move to curtail Soviet influence either by increasing its military and economic assistance in the region or promoting a regional successor to SEATO that froze-out the Soviet Union.

Con

The hardliners on detente would try to refute the idea that good relations with the US are forestalling or limiting a Peking-Washington connection. The Chinese invasion of the Paracel Islands and Peking's acquiescence to the prospective US base on Diego Garcia prove that a de facto understanding between the US and China is already a reality, detente notwithstanding. Furthermore, it is not necessarily immutable that Moscow would become the isolated party if its relations with Washington went sour. On the contrary, evidence of a general toughening of the Soviet posture might

have a tonic effect in Peking; it might do more to bring the Chinese to their senses than evidence of Soviet pusillanimity. Moreover, Peking may believe that the requirements of detente have a more restraining influence on Soviet behavior with respect to China than would emerge from a closer Sino-US relationship.

A Moscow that is less concerned about what the US or Europe thinks is also freer to deal with China from a position of strength. Dealing from such a position, a tougher line with respect to the US could be accompanied by fresh overtures to the Chinese. These might not bear immediate fruit, but they would be in the direction of bridging the ideological schism in a way that would be both acceptable to the Soviet Union and in the interests of both China and the USSR. Implicit in the naysayers' argument would be the prospect of some change in the Chinese leadership that would be less locked into the old disputes and animosity of the early years of the Chinese revolution. The hardliners might also hold out the prospect that any movement toward a closer connection with Peking would also increase the Soviet Union's leverage with the US.

Regarding the effects in the rest of East and South Asia, the hardliners would likely argue that if the USSR really needs Japanese investment, the profit motive will suffice to bring the Japanese around. They would also contend that there is a irreducible foundation of mistrust and conflicting interests between the Chinese and Japanese that would forestall any relationship that need greatly concern the USSR. They would argue against the idea that detente has helped the Soviet Union counter Chinese influence in Southeast Asia, pointing to the considerable inroads that the Chinese have been making over the past few years. In their view, a tougher line with the US would not have any appreciable impact on Moscow's relations with India, which is still dependent on Moscow for most of its sophisticated military hardware.

EUROPE

Pro

Detente is portrayed by its proponents as the most suitable means for achieving Moscow's goals in Europe under present conditions. The detente faction in the Soviet leadership

likely argues that the best way to remove US influence and extend Moscow's in Europe is by encouraging a multiplication of interlocking ties between the USSR and various European states. The detente group probably contends that its policies have already produced major results, as attested by the various agreements signed over the past few years between Moscow and/or its Warsaw Pact allies and West Germany and France in particular. International acknowledgement of the GDR's legitimacy has at last been achieved.

Moreover, this faction also likely points to Western disarray during the recent Middle East crisis and to the split between the US and a majority of the European states over the Arab oil embargo as further vindication of Soviet detente efforts. In general, Western European exposure to a benign Soviet policy face will tend to make them less desirous or tolerant of US presence and influence in Europe.

The proponents of detente likely maintain that a careful nurturing of Soviet ties in Europe will produce greater access to Western technology on terms favorable to Moscow, and will provide the USSR with an alternative to economic reliance on Washington. Although acknowledging that Moscow at times will be required to make concessionary gestures in the interest of producing Western acceptance of common objectives, for instance at MBFR or CSCE, the Soviet advocates of detente will argue that Moscow's aims will still be more readily realized than by adopting a tough belligerent posture. This group likely contends that minimal concessions at CSCE, for example, will lead to a hasty conclusion of that conference, securing West European acknowledgement of the far more important Soviet objectives of permanence of post-war boundaries, a greater Soviet voice in European affairs, and an enhancement of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. On MBFR, the detente faction will argue that Soviet willingness to reduce its military presence in central Europe can be manipulated to result in a weakening of US and NATO capabilities, not in the Warsaw Pact's.

The opponents of detente likely argue that the achievement of Soviet policy goals in Europe requires no concessions to the West. This group would contend that a manifest disunity among the the West European states and a gradual weakening of the Atlantic alliance was evident in the period before detente. Conciliatory moves on

Moscow's part now, this group would maintain, may backfire by causing the European nations to demand that the USSR pay a price for gains that were likely to come Moscow's way in any event.

This faction would claim that the MBFR talks had provided the US with the means to indefinitely postpone the unilateral reduction of its military forces in Europe; such reductions were all but inevitable prior to the opening of MBFR. CSCE, this group would contend, was supposed to be a quick, simple consolidation of the Soviet position in Europe, but the conciliatory requirements of detente have diluted CSCE's impact. De facto Western recognition of post-war boundaries in Europe had been achieved prior to the talks as a direct result of Moscow's military might. Soviet concessions at the talks now, particularly on such issues as the freer exchange of ideas and people, are dangerous and could imperil Soviet control over Eastern Europe and prove to be disruptive inside the USSR as well.

The detente opposition may also argue that the USSR should perhaps modify its longstanding goal of removing the US from Europe, since an American presence has actually served some Soviet purposes. This faction would maintain--and the proponents might be compelled to agree--that US economic interests and military presence have impeded, in some important instances, greater European unity, and have given Moscow ample justification for strengthening its position in Eastern Europe. A major reduction in the American presence in Europe might only serve to strengthen European resolve to pool their resources, particularly military, thereby becoming a formidable obstacle to Moscow's interests. Moreover, this group would argue that a major reduction of the US presence would make it more difficult for Moscow to maintain some hegemony over the Warsaw Pact states.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The movement of events in the Middle East, particularly since the October war, make this one of the most difficult areas for the proponents of detente. They would be hard pressed to find solid evidence that detente has helped the Soviets in concrete ways or that it has created conditions that point to a brighter

future for Soviet influence in the region. In essence, their arguments would boil down to assertions that, without a reasonably close relationship to the US, things would be worse than they now are.

Pro

The pro-detente leaders would argue that, for the first time, the US has publicly acknowledged that the USSR has a rightful and legitimate role to play in the Middle East. This acknowledgment, they would contend, has considerable symbolic importance by impressing on the countries of the region the fact that the Soviet Union will continue to be a power to be reckoned with in the Middle East and, therefore, in establishing the basis on which future Soviet policy can be built.

The detente supporters would make the case that the setbacks the USSR has suffered in the Middle East do not derive from any constraints imposed by detente. If anything, detente enabled the Soviets to back the Egyptians and the Syrians with less fear of directly involving themselves in hostilities with the US than was the case during the 1967 war. Because of detente, a potentially explosive situation was brought under control in a way that not only did not undermine Soviet influence in the Middle East but, in fact, provided via the Geneva conference a means by which Moscow could retain a major voice in the future political arrangement of the region.

The problem for the USSR, the detente supporters would assert, is that the objective conditions in the Middle East were, through no fault of Moscow or its policies, working in a way that was favorable to the US. The US was able to regain some initiative in the Middle East because the Arabs, particularly the Egyptians for their own reasons, were interested in affording the US a larger role. This had nothing to do with detente. It is well to remember, the pro-detente faction might well argue, that the Soviet Union is dealing with rulers in the Middle East whose social outlook is not always fundamentally in accord with the progressive forces of the world. Many of them share an ideological affinity with the US that acts as a bias--although not one that cannot be overcome with a properly tuned policy--against Soviet interests.

Con

Detente did not help prevent a war in the Middle East. Moreover, opponents of detente would point to recent developments in the area as evidence not only that detente does not promote Soviet interest in the world but that it can be artfully used by the US as a way of limiting or even erasing the USSR's hard-won gains. It was not detente, they would argue, that paved the way or even put the finishing touches on the emergence of the Soviet Union as a Middle East power. Washington's "acknowledgment" was nothing more than recognition of the reality of Soviet power and influence that was won by years of efforts, billions of rubles, and the reality of the Soviet navy in the Mediterranean.

The objective evidence demonstrates, without contradiction, that whatever its lip service to the "proper" Soviet role, Washington will do everything it can to thwart the Soviet Union in the Middle East. It is not only that Sadat is ungrateful for the Soviet Union's past assistance. Kissinger's personal diplomacy is skillfully designed to drive a wedge between the Arabs and the USSR, and he has done everything in his power to isolate the Soviet Union from the mainstream of Middle East events. US support for Israel has increased, not diminished. In truth, the Soviet Union has been relegated to the sidelines with the likes of France and Great Britain. Nor will going to Geneva necessarily change the objective situation. The Soviet Union may well find itself as isolated there as it does when Kissinger shuttles between the Arab capitals, or when the Israelis and Syrians are talking in Washington.

Detente has had the effect of beguiling the USSR into believing that the US would not seek unilateral advantage in an area of vital interest to both countries. The US, far from being constrained by detente, will feel itself having a greater latitude to operate in the area. This, the opportunists would argue, is the real meaning of the Defcon III alert.

The same misperceptions that make the US less solicitous of the Soviet Union's amour propre in the Middle East also have the effect of making the nations of the region less mindful of Soviet advice, less willing to shape their policies in accordance with Soviet desires, and even contemptuous of the Soviet will. Moscow's adherence to detente leads to a

sense of Soviet ineffectuality and weakness that provides the basis for Sadat's swing toward the US, for Asad's refusal to take Soviet advice, and even--the detente opponents might add--for the failure to make more inroads among the Persian Gulf states. They would argue that the meaning of detente must be shaped in such a way as to enable the Soviet Union to pursue without impediment its own interest in the Middle East. For example, this might mean that the Soviet Union would work against any peace settlement to which it did not have a major contribution, or which does not afford the Soviet Union the opportunity to strengthen its position in the region. The answer lies not in hoping that detente will cause the US to gratuitously grant the Soviet Union a place in the Middle East sun, but in a return to the basics of Soviet foreign policy, i.e., the vigorous support of progressive forces and a vigorous opposition to their enemies, all with a mind to shaping the objective realities within the region in a way favorable to Soviet interests.

THIRD WORLD

The problem of the Third World is not a front burner issue in the Kremlin, but it is of considerable interest both because of the ideological questions that are raised with regard to the proper role of the Soviet state in carrying the Communist message to the developing states, and because the Third World is frequently an area of rivalry between the Soviets, the Chinese and the US.

Pro

The proponents of detente would argue that the new image of equality and probity that is afforded by detente helps the Soviet Union in Third World countries that are still wary of dealing with the USSR. Detente helps reduce the possibility that rivalries between the USSR and the US in the Third World will, in any specific case, result in an unacceptable and dangerous level of tension between the two superpowers. The USSR can compete in the Third World with less fear of drifting into high-risk situations. The detente atmosphere allows and encourages Washington's contraction of its global presence and commitments, in turn, affording the USSR opportunities for expanding its influence in the Third World. While detente does not forestall the

Soviet Union from making inroads into new areas or from selectively expending its influence in countries of strategic location or natural resource value, detente also makes it easy for the USSR to avoid frittering away its resources in the Third World in a senseless competition with the US.

Con

The anti-detente forces would argue that the gains cited by the proponents have little to do with detente. The waning of Washington's interest and activities in the Third World stems from the Vietnam war and domestic problems of the US, and from the USSR's equal military footing with the US. Although detente may make it marginally less risky for the USSR to compete in the Third World, it also makes it more difficult for the Soviets to spread its influence there in a meaningful way. Insofar as the USSR becomes identified with the US as having some special responsibility in the world, then it loses its claim to having a unique, historical, revolutionary mission, identifiable with the revolutionary aspirations of the Third World.

Anti-detente elements would also point out, with some circumspection, that the Soviet Union's identification with the US makes it easier for China to interpose itself as a leader of the revolutionary Third World. In some areas of the world, like sub-Sahara Africa, the Chinese are actively and effectively challenging the USSR. The Chinese-Algerian communique following Boumediene's visit to Peking represented a step toward acknowledgement that the USSR is now to be considered a part of the technological and industrial world and can no longer claim to speak on behalf of or as part of the developing nations.

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